

VZCZCXRO8924
PP RUEHCI
DE RUEHKA #1224 3300922
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 250922Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7819
INFO RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 8735
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2475
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9977
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0955
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 1582

UNCLAS DHAKA 001224

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/PB, SCA/FO, S/CRS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: PREPARING FOR TRANSITION IN BANGLADESH

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Bangladesh's transition back to democracy following Parliamentary elections scheduled for December 29, will present significant challenges and opportunities for advancing U.S. interests here. The U.S. Government (USG) needs to begin planning for this transition now. In recent months, Mission Dhaka has put considerable effort into assuring the return of Bangladesh to a democracy via free, fair, and credible elections. Even as we concentrate on the "democratization" aspect of our "3 D's," we remain focused on the other D's - the need for development and the denial of space to terrorists. With this election, Bangladesh will conclude a two year State of Emergency, which was declared when the last elections, scheduled for January 2007, collapsed and Bangladesh was on the brink of political chaos. As we begin preparing our road map for addressing these issues in the months ahead, Embassy Dhaka considers preparing and coordinating the USG approach to this transition critical. We believe planning assistance from the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) would be invaluable and would help provide a concrete way forward.

PARTICIPANTS

¶2. (SBU) Embassy Dhaka recently held an interagency meeting to begin planning for the upcoming Bangladeshi Parliamentary elections slated for December 29. Members of the country team present at the meeting included: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Consular Section (CONS), Defense Attach Office (DAO), Department of Justice (DOJ), Management Section (MGMT), Public Affairs Office (PAO), Pacific Command Augmentation Team (PAT), Political/Economic Section (POL/ECON), Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC), Regional Affairs Office (RAO), Regional Security Office (RSO), and USAID.

COMMON CONCERNS

¶3. (SBU) The group identified many common concerns. While agency-specific concerns were discussed, the group agreed that security of U.S. Embassy personnel and American Citizens living in Bangladesh was a primary concern in the run up to elections. In recent weeks, the Caretaker Government has shifted focus to the upcoming transition. Anecdotal evidence suggests the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) is no longer able to implement major policy decisions. During the post-election period, Embassy Dhaka will be focused on how to engage with a new GOB in order to advance the USG agenda here. This agenda focuses on three D's: democratization, development, and denial of space to terrorists. A coordinated plan

will enable Embassy Dhaka to work immediately with a new government to tackle policy issues, such as the recognition of Kosovo or the Police Reform Ordinance of 2007, as well as management issues, like identifying secure space for the Chief of Mission Residence.

COMMENT: NEED FOR S/CRS ASSISTANCE

17. (SBU) Post sees the value of a coordinated plan to assist Embassy Dhaka as we move to elections and a new, democratically elected government. As elections draw closer, Post is increasingly focused on concluding remaining business with the Caretaker Government and ensuring free, fair, and credible elections. At the same time, Embassy Dhaka is identifying USG priorities during the first 60 to 90 days of a new government. With most agencies and sections focused on their own specific objectives, Post would appreciate the assistance of S/CRS in creating a whole-of-government plan. Such a plan would enable Embassy Dhaka to focus its limited resources on achieving overall USG objectives in Bangladesh.

Moriarty